THE MARBLE SPIRIT

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THE MARBLE SPIRIT

F. CLARKE

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THE ROE PRINTING COMPANY, TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK

O! Nobility! O! true and simple beauty! Goddess, the worship of whom signifies reason and wisdom, thou whose temple is an eternal lesson of conscience and truth, I come late to the threshold of thy mysteries; I bring to the foot of thy altar much remorse. Ere finding thee, I have had to make infinite search. The initiation which thou didst confer by a smile upon the Athenian at his birth, I have acquired by force of reflection and long labor.

* * * * * * *

A vast stream called Oblivion hurries us downward towards a nameless abyss. Thou art the only true God, O Abyss! the tears of all nations are true tears; the dreams of all wise men comprise a portion of truth, all things here below are mere symbols and dreams. The gods pass away like men, and it would not be well for them to be eternal. The faith that we have felt should never be a chain, and our obligations to it are fully discharged when we have carefully enveloped it in the purple shroud within the folds of which slumber the gods that are dead.

ERNEST RENAN

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THE APOLLO BELVEDERE

WHY did he leave the zenith height,
This Incarnation of the Light?
Why did he bring from mystic skies
The sacred roll for mortal eyes?
With sandaled feet the earth he trod
To bear the message of a god,
That out of darkness man may gleam
The meaning of the sorry scheme.
To fleeting forms that pass away
He grants the gift of yesterday.
The sons of earth have felt the tread
That woke the spirit in the dead,
But I would grasp the sacred scroll
And test the cable of the soul;
For we are pearls that ever cling
Upon an everlasting string!

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

Let other men assume the part
To laud the sculptor in his art,
The basic thought I seek to find
And cleave the meaning with the mind.
For Tree of Knowledge in this Life
I call the gods to aid my strife!
For though they wrought upon the stage
For children of another age —
Far down the corridor of Time
Runs Echo with unerring chime!
The centre of each soul is Light
Though born upon the path of night,
And each mistake in Time and Space,
Though common to the human race —
The man that seeks a god to make
That man himself is a mistake.

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

The god that works within each man
Is making for a perfect plan
And we elect that know the rule
To be the god — or tragic fool!
Hence moving from the men that scan
This marvel in the Vatican,
I let the god his secret keep
In silence where the Cæsars sleep —
And meet a sight all men reprove:
The shattered statue in the Louvre.

THE WINGED VICTORY

THERE out upon a barque of stone
All mutilated and alone
She stands — and must endure the gaze
Of men that view her with amaze —
Whose head is hot — whose blood is warm —
Who wrought this havoc on her form!
I see and feel through eyes of pain
The image forced upon the brain
And sense the horror — I am part
Of those that desecrated art;
Whose darkness makes me doubt the plan
Of godhood that exists in man!

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

I cannot see, though near the prow,
The scripture on her marble brow —
And envy those among the dead
That ever knew her wondrous head.
For whom the wreath, what was the name,
O Victory of heroic fame!
And to my mind there came a moan
Of anguish from the headless stone.

THE VENUS OF MELOS

AND she the greatest — though the last,
That armless wonder of the past!
With head erect and form sublime
She stands — the Mystery of Time.
This exile in an alien land
Whose mind no man may understand —
Whose missing hands have made us pause
To seek the Truth within the cause.
'The soul of man I ever sway,'
The lonely image seemed to say,
'You carved a god in marble plan
And killed the god within the man.
The Book of Knowledge may be read
I guard the secret of the dead.'
How base the substance of the heart
Assigning her to Venus art!

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

She lives within a realm unknown
Of Classic virtue writ in stone,
As every soul of man can prove
Her inspiration in the Louvre;
For eyes that seek both truth and grace
Are riveted upon her face!
If ever mirror showed her eyes
It was not beauty to surmise;
But with the Sibyl sight to trace
Each record of the human race.
The polished surface in repose
Will all the universe expose —
All time is 'now,' all distance 'here'
To eyes that make solution clear!
No Venus ever held your place,
You fair Historian of the race!

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

The hand unseen inscribed the trust
Of dynasties now gone to rust;
When skilled Atlantis to the earth
Released the mystery of her birth;
And Memnon on the listening stream
In clarion voice proclaimed the dream —
When stilled beneath a waveless deep
She sank to breathe her dreamless sleep!
The greatest warrior of our age
Has cast a slur on Clio's page;
That Valor's deed when nobly done
Is but a lie agreed upon.
Such lowly ethics were unknown
To you whose fame is carved in stone —
Those timeless eyes with purer light
The law of manhood read aright!

THE REVERIE

IF marble lips could only move,
O lonely exile in the Louvre,
What ray of knowledge you could cast
Upon our annals of the past!
We who live within this age —
And yet misread the sacred page,
In doubt that borders on despair
In lifted hands to empty air —
With feet of clay within the mire
We strive to reach Promethean fire;
For every heart on earth has bled
To probe the secret of the dead!
Alike to you the hope and tears
That crave for life beyond the years;
The gods have known the hidden cause
How man has fought Eternal Laws.

The Light and Truth whose final goal
Brings conscious life to every soul!
If that still tongue but once could speak
The wisdom known unto the Greek —
Why moving 'mid the shades we seem
But shadows in an endless stream!
Why form is fugitive — a gate
Whose portal bears the name of Fate.
Why Life in all its strange relation
Is built on sorrow's firm foundation.
What pilgrimage those words could spread
From seers now numbered with the dead!
That silent voice could break the gloom
That shrouds the darkness of the tomb.

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

You whose eyes have seen the vision
Of the Mystery Elysian —
Where the mind beholds the mark
Of vital essence in the dark,
On whose recording ear there fell
Apollo's Delphic Oracle!
You whose rooted feet have trod
The sunlit shadow of the god;
The Mystery of Life is known
Deep hidden in your heart of stone!
With passive eyes in that fierce light
That beats about Olympus height —
You stand — and see all men decline
Beneath the iron Hand of Time.
What reck you of the pain whose doom
Has marked our pathway to the tomb!

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

Then musing on a story old —
That down the centuries has rolled,
How once a sculptor carved to life
A being who became his wife.
I made my soul pursue the thought
And seek the being whom he wrought;
The one that lent transcendent charms
To marble with the vanished arms —
That through the spirit I may glean
The secret of the hand unseen,
And o'er the bridge of Time retrace
The meaning of the marble face.
As mortal mind will yet traverse
The border of the universe —

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

I seek the Truth at any cost
(For what is known is never lost)
From one whose soul portrayed the part
Of inspiration to the art —
The phantom form will not betray
The statue — or the earthly clay.
In memory she will feel the part
And give the Truth from heart to heart!
If life on earth be what it seems
The truer life the land of dreams —
I call the spirit to unroll
The pageant that awaits the soul!

THE VISION

SO when my lids are sealed in sleep
The astral eyes the vigil keep —
For this the real life would seem,
The day-star hour, but the dream.
With sense-perception in retreat
There came the sound of sacred feet —
The arms I never saw in light
Were closed about my soul at night.
The ether through all space has taught
There is no death — all life is Thought.
The dial known as Time she broke,
The disincarnate spirit spoke.

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

With pallid lips and icy breath
Of one long locked in rigid death —
The thought within my soul she read
And gave this message from the dead:
'Far under Herculaneum's crust
Amid the ashes and the rust
A mighty moral once was taught
To those that read in marble thought.
A king has shaped his crown to make
A chain his hand can never break —
The statue of a slave of old
Beside him builds a crown of gold!
My replica lies buried there
That man will raise to upper air.
When you have vanished from the race
The world will know my vital place;
And man will read what I alone
Have graven on the shield of stone.

The witness that will wake my name
Will lift to earth my scroll of fame,'
And to my soul this truth she brings:
'The one that stands with broken wings
Is not the Victory you deem,
But Victor on the Lethal stream.
Out on the waves of purple deep
Still bears the wreath of silent sleep
O'er Stygian seas to dull the pain
Of those whose vessels sailed in vain —
To men on whom the gods enforce
To bear about a crippled corse.
And all will know the heart is true
That meet her steady eyes of blue;
For each the final friend will find
The Liberator of Mankind!'

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

I ask if I may understand
The stylus in the marble hand —
From Hermes's hand she takes the scroll
And reads to my absorbing soul: —
'The gift of Light the problem solves
Whence dawn of consciousness evolves —
The greater Light, the greater Power —
Beware of how you use the Dower;
A Planet moves in cosmic dust
Whose race betrayed my Sacred Trust.'

* * * * * *

That sentient life has just begun
For those that toil beneath the sun —
She proved — as with her soul she lent
A marvel to the firmament!

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

With marble clasp my hand in hers,
She led me past the plane of Mars
And showed me where beyond the sphere
Another world had journeyed there!
Then drew back to the curve in space
The Planet with the perished race —
That claimed the heritage of Light,
But scorned the god that gave the Right.
And far beyond the further rim
Of worlds that unto man seem dim,
She pointed spheres in outer space
As yet undreamed of by my race!
And through Urania's whole domain
She led my soul with eager brain —
Till far beyond the realm of sight
I merged into unbounded Light!

Then there with finger cold did trace
Great æons in a boundless space —
Where Truth within the Truth is brought
Like comets that are interwrought —
And line by line did there enscroll
The Book of Knowledge for my soul!
The problem of the 'now' and 'then',
The secret of the 'where' and 'when'
And drew the sacred sign for me —
The symbol of Eternity!

* * * * * *

My sojourn in the realm I sought
Has led me further than I thought —
And what I saw in outer space
I dare not stencil for my race;
For unto man I may not give
The Mystery of Life — and live.

THE MARBLE SPIRIT

The signet seal upon my lips
She locked with marble finger-tips.
And sacredly the soul must keep
The secret that is sealed in sleep.

THE BOOK

F. CLARKE

These lines are inscribed in gratitude
to the memory of
MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS
whose Meditations have been
an inspiration in my life

THE BOOK

I treasure Truth for those in quest
Whose mental key unlocks the chest;
I know not boundary in space
But light the torch of every race.
I grant religion in your need,
Live for each altar, for each creed,
And welcome with an equal claim
The man of worth — the man of blame.
I seek out for myself one part,
A shrine in your heroic heart
And claim with justice that the thought
To reason only will be brought.

THE BOOK

That other arts may not replace
My effort in your noble race;
For Time will make the hand unclasp
The feeble matter in its grasp,
The monument a moment stands
To drift again in desert sands —
But I have set the law at naught
Begotten in Eternal Thought!
Look how my Temple lifts its head
O'er all the structure of the dead;
And when my Banner is unfurled
How Thought alone has ruled the world!
The Macedonian's empire lies
In ashes 'neath unthinking skies,
The power that subverted men
Was Aristotle's mighty pen!

THE BOOK

The man whose genius forged alone
The greatest empire earth has known —
Where lies the honor and the fame
Whose kingdom now is but a name?
His Commentaries o'er the plains
Is all the glory that remains!
The exile on Helena's isle
Whom fickle fortune would defile —
What greater conquest could he plan
Whose Code of Law has governed man?
The gods of old with sapient brow
Shine as a graven symbol now
Upon the letter of the page;
That stands the Pharos of the Age!
For all that they have ever brought
Is clasped within my sphere of Thought —
And in the leaf you now behold
Apollo's rod has turned to gold!

The dust descends on Homer's gods,
They rose and fell — but ever broods
Through all his starlit subtlety
For you one great reality —
Those fatal three! within whose eyes
Unveiled your whole creation lies —
All life they hold — you should not shun
To know their power. The staff is spun
From first to last by hands unseen
And you the shadow on the screen.
Lachesis sees with eyes of dread
The Law of Life control her thread!
Though Clotho plies as best she can
The web to form the fate of man;
But weave the pattern great or small,
A common lot compels you all!

Atropo holds you in her power,
Her shears decide the fatal hour —
They cast the dice — she counts the number;
Then seals the eyes of each in slumber.
Each heart and brain will know the price
That play against the loaded dice.
With blinded vision never rue
The Law that holds the balance true —
The Mighty Plan will ever roll
Its Justice to your blinded Soul.
And when you fail to hold the part,
The strength that lies in hand or heart,
Turn to the kingdom of the Mind
And reign supreme among your kind!
The gladiator knows the part
Supremacy of hand and heart;

He does not feel the sacred rage
That I disclose to every age —
And dare not come upon your realm
To face the giant at the helm!
The feeble hand has played its part
That guards the giant's dual art —
When pinioned in a mortal frame
Soars for the Everlasting Name!
The Colosseum could not hold
The gladiator you behold —
For I have lived beyond the stone,
The gift of gods to man alone!
And ancient ethics cannot rend
The Law in Life which I defend:
That change is nature's only art
Is what the gods did not impart.
The idol's vacant eye is blind,
My voiceless tongue awakes the mind!

And static eyes the balance bar —
Where you have weighed the distant star!
The keystone arch that holds my fame
Once perished in a shameful flame;
When papyrus of priceless worth
In tears of ashes called to Earth: —
'They sought to slay the Muse in vain;
The Phœnix shall arise again,
Through genius that is yet unborn
The world will feel her sacred scorn;
Produce a race she can inspire
Whose men demand Promethean fire.'
When Time has hushed the singer's theme
The sculptor and his sacred dream;
What art alone, defying death
Gives knowledge its Eternal Breath?
The past still sends the ray of light
To you that seek and store aright.

THE BOOK

I — the Voice of all the People,
Make each Nation my Disciple.
O Sovereign Seeker, I am here:
To help your free-born soul to clear
The lesson of my final term
You will not carry to the worm;
For when the end of life is told,
My scripture in the mind behold!
I nourished every sane desire
And strove to lend a purer fire.
The dross and ashes of your days
I lightened with my kindly rays —
To you that built on earthly fame
The coffin yawning for the frame.
The hour of death will show the whim
Of you that built on heart and limb.

THE BOOK

O Soldier in the storm of Strife,
The mind forgets its aim in Life
When shadows darken 'round the bed,
And those you love desert the dead.
But I will sound a note so clear
In memory to the inner ear —
To shake the mooring of the soul
And free it from the earthly toll.
My beacon light upon the bark
Will guide the vessel through the dark,
To cleave the denseness in the mind
That lived and moved amid the blind,
And failed to read within the line
The Thought and Truth that I define.
Your mind will mirror back again
The Word I never gave in vain;
For all I brought you in the past
Will rally to your aid at last!

THE BOOK

When every Thought that you have read
Will call to memory from the dead:
'Of all you met you are a part
And changing form is Nature's art.'
For you misread my text and rhyme
Who thought to live in point of Time:
Hence I will wake the soul to strife —
That death is but an act in Life!
The line of youth, the curve of age,
Are surface marks upon the page;
For like the river is your range,
All that endures is endless change!
The tide of Life will rise and fall,
But Mind will know the All-in-All.
You see a fraction of the Scroll
When Destiny calls forth the Soul;
The wisest man has yet to know
That folly is his only foe!

THE BOOK

I gaze into the strongest mind
And know the fire of your kind,
So peering through the mist of years
I fear not other eyes of tears.
You pass from earth — I know not when —
But I — I go to other men.
The chisel upon stone has wrought;
I am the living shape of Thought!
I know the power within the brain
That wrestles with the Truth to gain;
And when you pose to man as wise
You meet my all-pervading eyes;
Through plastic growth the iron hook
Has forced the secret from the book;
The mind has neither sex nor age
That moves o'er my undaunted page!

THE BOOK

The past and future, in their flight,
Are one; for I have seen the light.
And you, that breathe within this age,
Do wisely when you seek my page —
For I reveal a higher life
To starving souls in mortal strife
And voice the wisdom of the dead
That never give a stone for bread —
For you are of the chosen men
Who madly seek the Truth, as then.
The Thundering Legion in its might
Is sunk into Eternal Night,
The Stoic's Meditations toll
The sacred office of the soul,
And searching ages yet unborn
Shall drain the Cup of Life at morn.

My script with its compelling power
Has forced your homage to this hour.
And freely of my store I give
To you that have the power to live;
For I have seen beyond the seer —
The pathos of your short career,
Who fight to break Eternal Laws
And broken on the Wheel of Cause!
Whose god-like head is ever bent
To matter and its discontent,
Whose soul a sphere without a blot
You focused to a vanished spot,
Whose race betrayed the Architect
That built for Human Intellect!
Who wage atrocities on men
Unknown to brutes beneath your ken,
Who kill and mutilate your kind
To leave a tarnished name behind,

THE BOOK

Who plot to break the Lawful Plan
And find the Law that breaks the Man!
In utter darkness you will reel
Beneath the Potter's Mighty Wheel —
A grain of sand so insecure
The human grasp does not endure;
You lose the battle as you pass
Through Earth's Eternal Hour-glass.
The Law of Compensation still
Works through the Everlasting Will.
The Soul entombed within the clay
Is blinded on its natal day;
Alone it came into the world,
Alone it passed with banner furled —
Sad Pilgrim on the Road of Life —
It never blended in the Strife!

Its hope of intersecting thought
With sad reality is fraught,
The Fates had cut upon the Scroll
The Isolation of the Soul!
The fight unfair it fought throughout
Will reach amid a range of doubt
The Hand of Justice, when you feel
The power of the Potter's Wheel!
The mind of man will know its dower
When death strikes out the silent hour.
View not the shifting scene with awe;
Man cannot change Eternal Law.
Retain your foothold in the Race;
Your birthright is Eternal Space —
With fearless eyes and scornful hand
Strike down the barriers that stand —
Assert your heritage, and find
The Godhead of Eternal Mind!

THE BOOK

I am the Banner of your Soul;
I only give what you unroll.
You are the underlying cause
Of all my wisdom — all my laws;
I only hold the deed in trust
Of man whose brain is turned to dust.
I guard the gift of fool and sage;
I challenge life from age to age —
I make you pause, and think, and look,
The Banner of your Soul — The Book.

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